THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF BIG IDEA PRODUCTIONS

What's the Big Idea?™

SEPTEMBER 2000

ESTHER

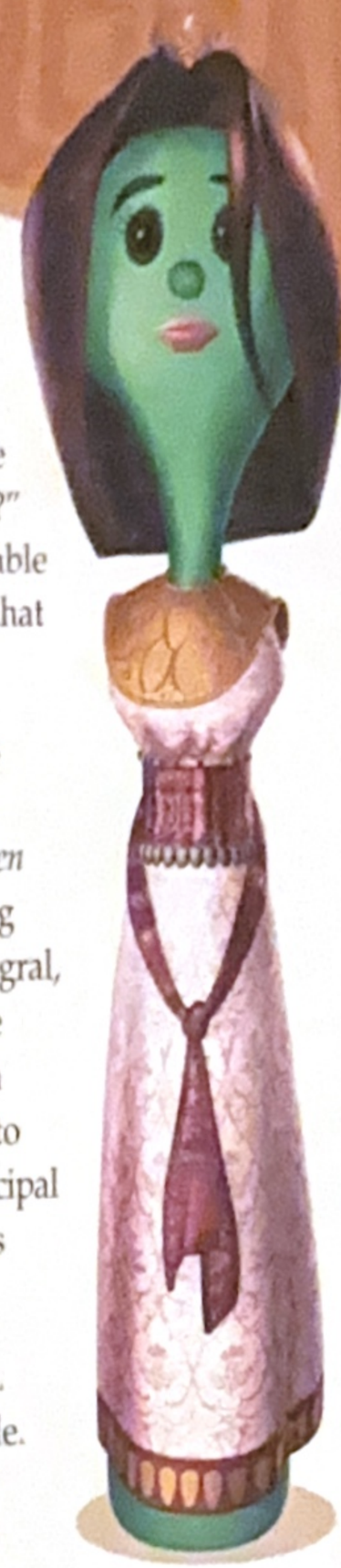
The Girl Who Became Queen

Discover where true courage comes from!

includes

- Larry's Story Page
- Archibald's Amazing Archi-Facts
- The Comic Adventures of Junior and Laura
- Fun Family Activities
- ... and so much more!

It's a Girl!



Over the last few years, we've had more than a few fans write us to point out the fact that VeggieTales has been a bit lacking in the "strong female character" department. Bob and Larry are both boys (at least as much as vegetables can be boys), Junior's a boy, and so are many of the supporting characters. "What's up with this?" they ask. "Is it a conspiracy?" As much as we hold up dear Laura the Carrot (particularly her commendable role in *Rack, Shack & Benny*), looking back across our films, we had to admit that the world of VeggieTales was indeed rather low on great girl characters.

So what's the story? It was entirely unintentional. Bob and Larry were modeled after the personalities of me and my friend Mike Nawrocki. Since we also wanted to do their voices, they were boys from the get-go. When I created the Asparagus family (mom, dad, and Junior) way back for *Where's God When I'm Scared?*, I wanted to portray a healthy, nurturing father-son relationship (something Hollywood doesn't do very well). So I made Junior a boy and gave dad a more integral, involved role than mom. And then we started telling Bible stories — Daniel in the Lion's Den, Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, David and Goliath — most of which are very male-heavy, so we were constantly developing new male characters to flesh out these stories. And of course, the fact that Mike and I are still the principal voices for most VeggieTales characters doesn't help much, since neither of us have developed any particularly convincing female voices.

Our situation is not at all unusual in the world of children's entertainment. In the early years of Sesame Street, all the Muppet characters were male. Wanting to rectify the situation, the best they could come up with was "Prairie Dawn," possibly the weakest Muppet character of all time. Welcome to Sesame Street — the world of Bert & Ernie, Oscar, Big Bird, Grover, Cookie Monster, and ... Prairie Dawn! Once again, a male-heavy group of creatives cranked out a boatload of great male characters without even noticing. It wasn't until Jim Henson's good friend Frank Oz found "Miss Piggy" lurking somewhere within him that the world of the Muppets found their first great female character. (I asked Mike to try to find the "Miss Piggy" within him. He just stared at me blankly.)

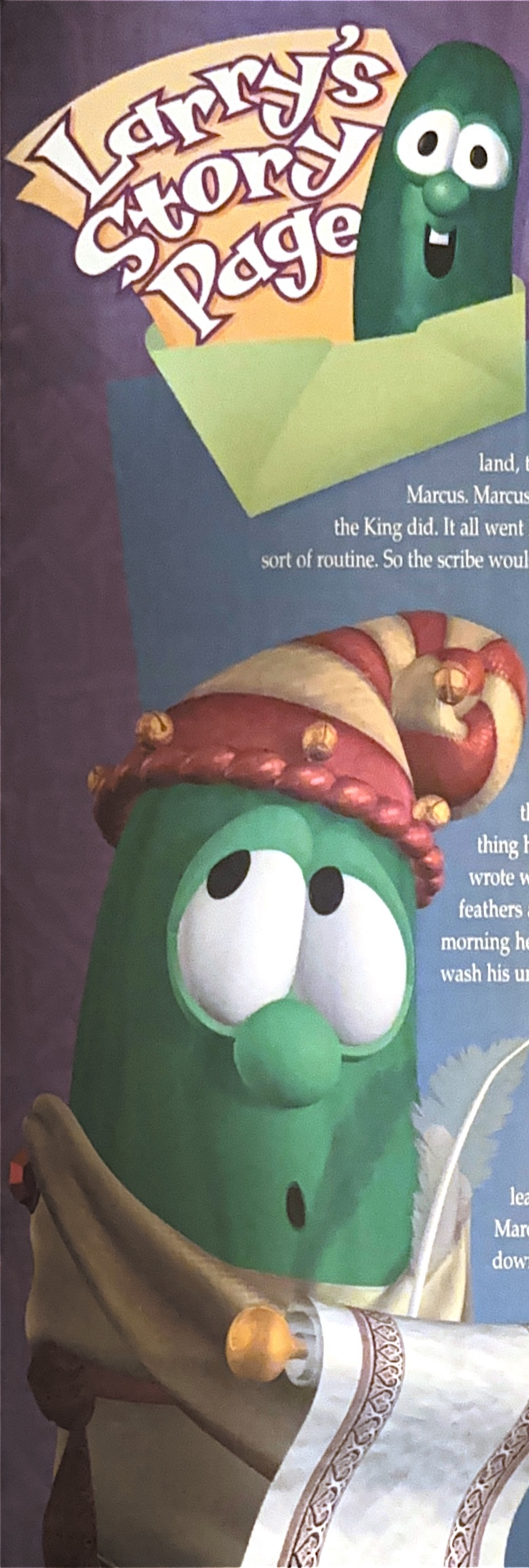
But in addition to teaching great lessons and values from the Bible, we also want to provide good role models for both boys and girls. With that in mind, we turned our attention to one of the greatest female characters of the Bible, Esther. This extraordinary story will not only teach your kids a wonderful lesson about courage in the face of adversity, it will also give your daughters and granddaughters a heroine truly worth looking up to. Beyond Esther, though, Big Idea is looking for great female creatives who can write and voice the kinds of female characters and shows that will make a huge impact in a world overflowing with Spice Girls. In the end, the results are bound to be a lot more productive than Mike's search for his inner "Miss Piggy."

Phil Vischer

Phil Vischer
Big Idea Founder and Top Tomato

Illustration by Big Idea artist Judy Nikers

Larry's Story Page



In our last issue, Larry asked if he could tell a story. Even though he needed your help finishing it, Larry enjoyed writing so much that he volunteered to play a scribe in the newest VeggieTales story, *Esther*. A scribe, by the way, is a writer who keeps track of what's going on. So, needless-to-say, Larry the Scribe asked if he could have another chance to write a story. And, of course, we said sure. This is what Larry wrote:

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there was a King who had a scribe named Marcus. Marcus the Scribe wrote down every single thing that the King did. It all went into the official royal record. Many days were sort of routine. So the scribe would write things like:

8:35 King brushes his teeth.
8:38 King shaves.
8:39 King puts toilet paper on his face.

Then one day during lunch, while Marcus was jotting down something about the way the King was chewing his sandwich, a terrible thing happened. Marcus' feather — the one that he wrote with — broke. Normally, Marcus kept extra feathers around for situations like this, but that morning he was running late because he forgot to wash his uniform and he had to throw it in the dryer in one of those dry-cleaning bags, except that it wasn't a dry cleaning bag — it was a plastic garbage bag that melted in the fluff cycle! So after he picked all the hot plastic off his uniform, he rushed out the door leaving his extra feathers behind. Now Marcus was in big trouble. If he didn't write down everything the King did, he could lose his job and have to go back to cleaning up after the camels like he did before he learned to write. He had to come up with a way to write down what the King did — and fast! ...

Oh no! It happened again!

Larry was called to the set and he's not able to finish this silly story! Can you help? Great! Be sure to write down some of the things that you think happened on that crazy day in the King's palace. Then, send your story to us if you'd like. After Larry reads them, we'll print a few stories in our next issue! Send your stories (and artwork too!) to:

Big Idea Productions
Larry's Story Page
PO Box 189
Lombard, IL 60148

Or you can email your story to:
Larrystory@bigidea.com.

And thanks for helping out Larry the Scribe!

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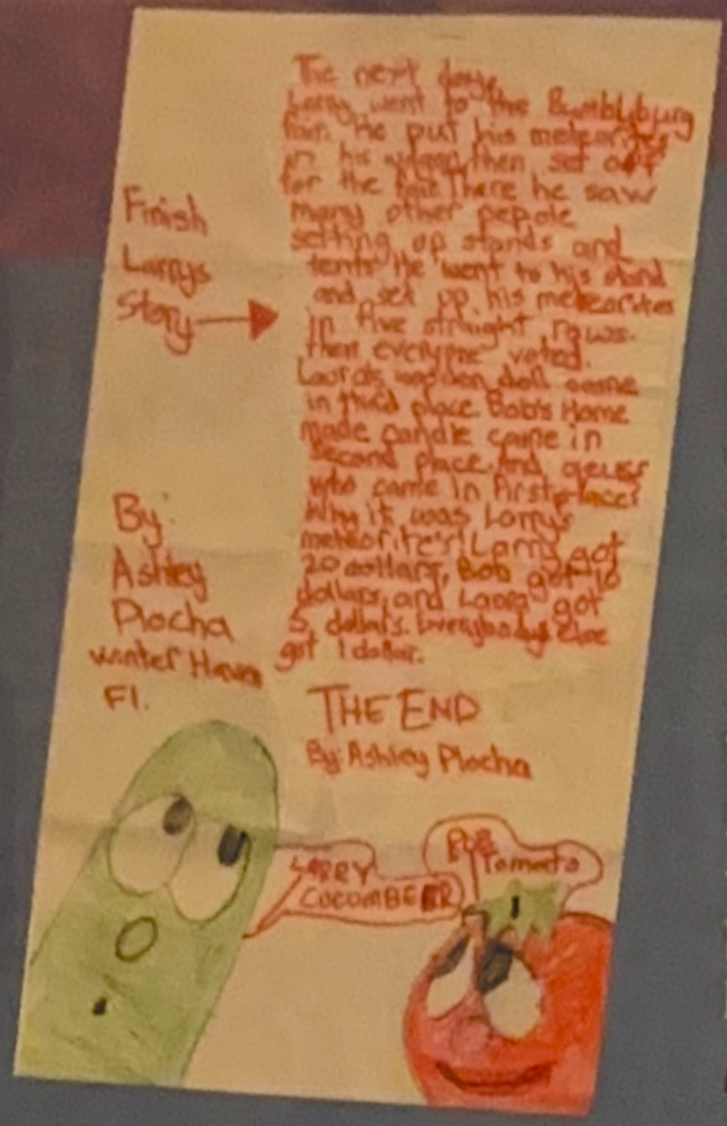
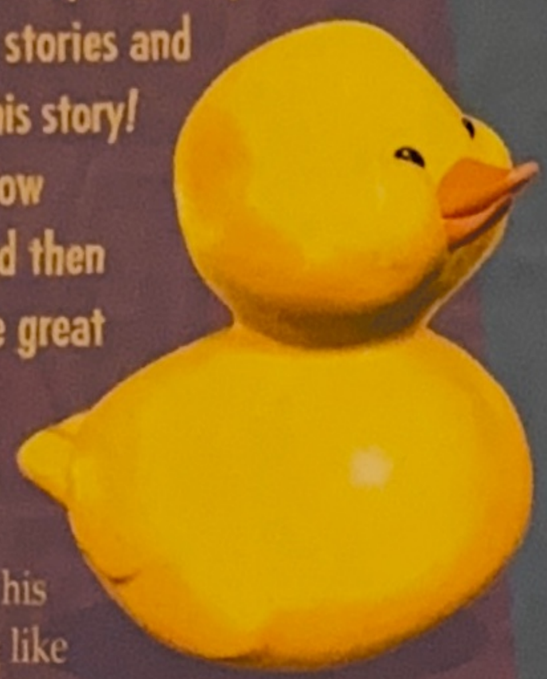
Larry's Story Page



The next day Larry went to the Bumblyburg fair. He put his meteorites in his wagon, then set off for the fair. There he saw many other people setting up stands and tents. He went to his stand and set up his meteorites in five straight rows. Then everyone voted. Laura's wooden doll came in third place. Bob's homemade candle came in second place. And guess who came in first place?! Why it was Larry's meteorites! Larry got 20 dollars, Bob got 10 dollars and Laura got 5 dollars. Everybody else got 1 dollar. The End.

Ashley Plocha, Winter Haven, Florida

As you might remember from the last issue of "What's the Big Idea?" Larry started writing a story he couldn't finish. So he asked for your help. Larry was very excited to receive your fun stories and pictures that helped finish his story! We wanted to remind you how Larry's Story started … and then share with you a few of the great responses Larry received.



One night while Larry was sleeping, a little duck came to his window and started quacking like crazy. This was a little strange because no one had ever seen a duck in Larry's neighborhood — there were no ponds or lakes or streams or anything. Just a water tower. With all of that quacking, the duck was trying to wake Larry up. The duck was looking right at Larry and hopping up and down on the window sill. It almost seemed like the duck was dancing, but that couldn't be because everyone knows that ducks don't dance. But if the duck was trying to wake Larry up, it wasn't having much success. You could say it was an unlucky duck. You see, Larry had gone to bed very tired that night because he had been up late polishing his meteorites. Well, they weren't really meteorites, or at least that's what all of Larry's friends told him. They said they were just plain old rocks. But that didn't bother Larry. No matter what anybody said, he knew for sure that his shiny meteorites would win first prize in the Bumblyburg science fair — he just needed to squeeze in a couple of hours of sleep before the fair started. If only that duck would be quiet …

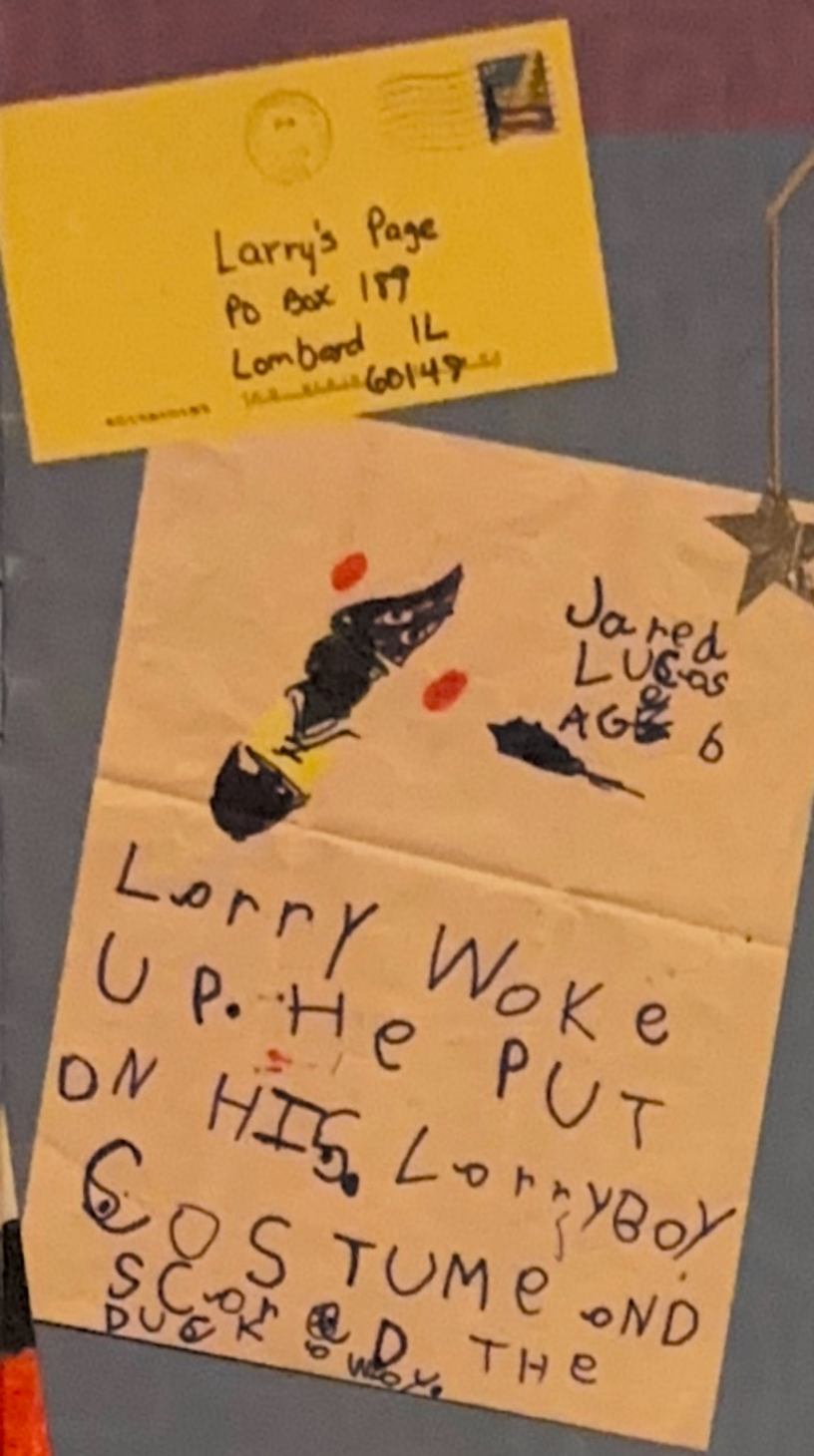
Finally, it was morning. "Cock-a-doodle-doo" went the rooster. "B-r-r-r-ing" went Larry's alarm clock. Of course Larry could hardly hear either because of the crazy quacking, but he woke up anyway. The duck was mad. It scolded him! Larry said, "Sorry, I was in deep sleep." Of course Larry knew duck language or else he wouldn't be able to communicate with him. Well they kept on talking until the "ding-ing" clock struck 8:00. Oh no! Almost time for the science fair. He looked in his bag, then he cried, "THEY ARE GONE! MY SHINY METEORITES!" Then "Quack." "What a splendid idea, duck!" said Larry, now calm as can be. Minutes later … "And the winner of the real gold 200,000 pound 1st place medal is Larry the Cucumber who entered a duck!" In the car on the way home … "Thanks duck. I couldn't have won 1st place without you!" "Quack." (You're welcome.)

Trey Chambers, West Point, New York

eMail

If only that duck would be quiet so Larry could sleep better. Just then Larry woke up. He squinted at the duck. Can't I get some sleep, Ducky? "Quack-quack" said the duck. Larry tried to sleep but the duck kept quacking. Now Larry understood. "What?" he said. "I don't know." The duck was sad now. "Oh OK," Larry said. The duck jumped up and down. Larry got out of bed. He would miss the Bumblyburg science fair because he would help the duck find his mother. They walked outside. They went out of Bumblyburg to a pond. But they saw nothing. Just then Larry turned around. He saw a duck. Larry took the duck to the mother duck. Larry got home. He slept better now. At the science fair, Larry won first prize.

Ryan Schalow, Show Low, Arizona



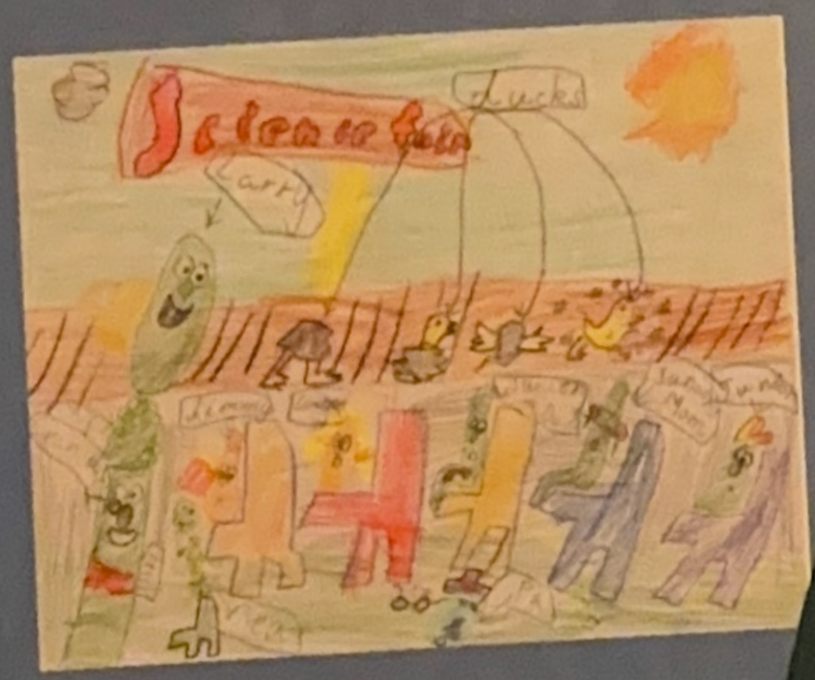
Larry woke up.
He put on his Larry-Boy costume
and scared the duck away.

Jared Lucas, Pataskala, Ohio

If only that duck would be quiet, then he could get some rest and polish them more. The next day, Larry woke up to the quacking duck. Larry said, "What is that noise? I will not get my bath and not be clean for the fair. I won't be able to clean and gather more meteorites from under the water tower for the fair." Then the quacking stopped. Larry got up, got dressed, and followed the duck all the way to the other side of the house. In that room was where he kept his meteorites. The duck quacked as it looked at them with pleading eyes for he wanted one. Larry said, "No, not now, it's bath time." Soon, Larry was in the bath when the duck came in with him. Larry liked the duck so much that he wanted more. Then it was time for the contest. Then he held the duck and went under the water tower. The duck saw them and all surprised said, "MY EGGS!" Larry was surprised; they looked just like his meteorites! Then he grabbed his duck and ran to the contest. The judges passed his entry and he didn't win 1st prize. Larry was so mad, that he threw them and they hit his best friends. The meteorites were eggs! The duck was upset and left Larry for they were her best friend's eggs. Then Larry's friends left Larry; they had egg all over them. Larry sighed and said, "I hope I learn from this mistake." The End.

Kylie K. Bermensolo, Mountain Home, Idaho

Larry did not get a lot of sleep because the duck was quacking all night long. He was so sleepy that he bumped into his meteorites, and they fell on the floor and broke into tiny pieces. So Larry decided to use the quacking duck as his meteorite. He used his duck whistle to call more ducks to come into his window. He covered the ducks with the bits and pieces of the broken meteorites. He brought them to the science fair. It was his turn to show his meteorites, but all of the sudden there was this quacking sound. Heads, wings, and duck feet started poking out of the pieces of meteorites. It was time for Archibald to announce the winner. And the winner was Larry! Everyone thought the ducks were so cute they gave first prize to Larry and his ducks.



Philip Abbruscato
Lindenhurst, New York

Thanks!

The stories everybody sent were great!

ESTHER AND THE STOLEN APPLE

An apple. It's only an apple. But Esther's friend just took it without paying for it! What should Esther do? What would you do? Maybe it's not an apple. Maybe it's a candy bar. Or a pack of collector cards. Or some money. Just like Esther, you know that stealing is wrong. But Esther is scared to talk to her friend. And you might be scared too. But Esther's cousin Mordecai reminds her (and you!) that "You never have to be afraid to do what's right." Where does Mordecai get his courage? Well, he's learned that "there is nothing we can't face when God is at our side!" And that's important to remember because, as Mordecai reminds Esther, "there are problems out there a lot bigger than stolen apples!"

3 2 1 Penguins!
TM
Buckle up space cadets
... and get ready to meet four of the wackiest space cowboys ever to leave our solar system — Zidgel, Fidgel, Midgel, and Kevin!
THE NEW SHOW FROM
BIG IDEA
www.bigidea.com

Archibald's Amazing Archi-Facts

Esther's World

Hey there boys and girls! How do you like my outfit? We get to wear all kinds of cool costumes in the new VeggieTales story, ESTHER ...The Girl Who Became Queen. *That's because the Bible story of Esther is from a long, long, long time ago. I wanted to learn about the story, so I asked Archibald if he could help me — and boy did he ever!*

A party of biblical proportions!

The Festival of Purim is a Jewish celebration that comes straight from the pages of Esther! Throughout the biblical story of Esther, Haman plots against the Jewish people. But through the courage of Esther, God protects the Jews. Each spring, Jewish people celebrate Purim by reading the book of Esther (called the Megillah).

Hey, why all the noise?

Purim is celebrated in a number of different ways (including the wearing of costumes), but you almost always know when someone is celebrating. How? Because of the noise! Graggers are special noisemakers that are used during Purim. When the story of Esther is read, every time Haman's name is said, children shake their graggers. (To find out how to make your own gragger, be sure to check out the family activities page in this newsletter!)

Welcome back everyone

as we once again seize the opportunity to LEARN! What better way to spend one's time than in the pursuit of knowledge! ... Yes. Well ... why don't we take a look at the world of Esther's time. Whoever said history and archeology couldn't be fun?!?

And they feasted on triangle-shaped cookies

As the Bible says, Purim is "a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other." Part of the feasting comes in the shape of triangular cookies called Hamantashen, which are often also given to friends as gifts.

Archibald would like to thank his new friends John M. Monson, Ph.D., a professor at Wheaton College and Angie Lieber for their help in tracking down a lot of this information!

Let's have a parade!

In the book of Esther, Mordecai, Esther's cousin, is honored by King Xerxes for the role he played in saving the king's life. Mordecai gets to wear a royal robe that the king had worn as he rides one of the king's horses through the city. Kind of sounds like a one-person parade!

History on parade

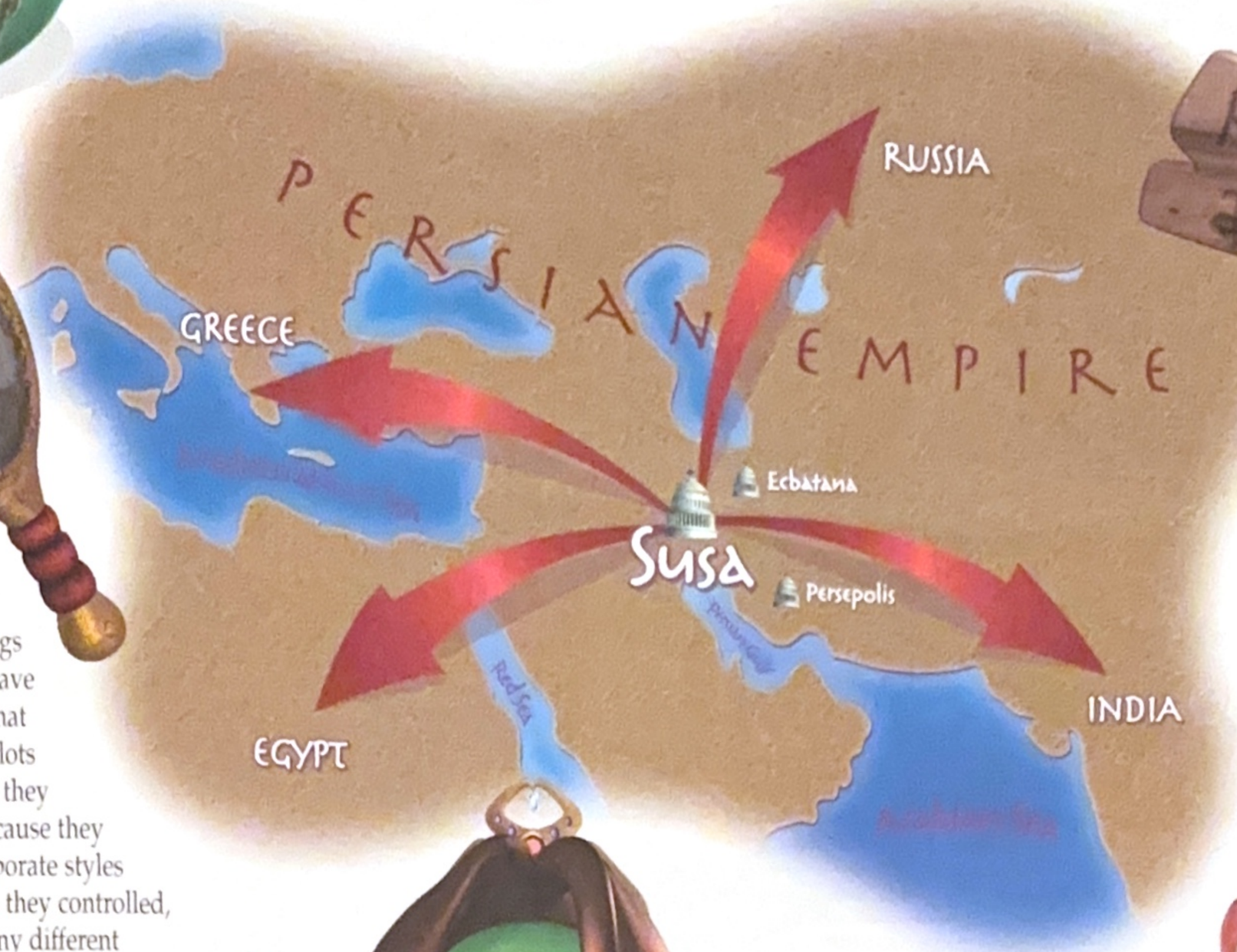
Parades go way back in history. How far? Try 5,000 years! While parades in America tend to be for national holidays (like Independence Day, Memorial Day, and the like), early parades were usually held for religious purposes or as the means for a government to display military strength. There is no proof yet that little cups of ice cream with wooden spoons were passed out at parades 5,000 years ago, but who knows what archeologists will turn up in the future!

Pick a capital, any capital

Susa, where Esther lived, was one of many capital cities in Persia! In fact, there were so many capitals, they ended up choosing three main capitals: Ecbatana, Persepolis, and Susa.

Marching to Susa

Looking for the land of Esther? Well, archeologists beat you to it! The Persian city of Susa, where Esther lived, was one of the earliest sites for archeological exploration of biblical landmarks. Susa was situated about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, in what is now southwestern Iran.



Pursuing Persia

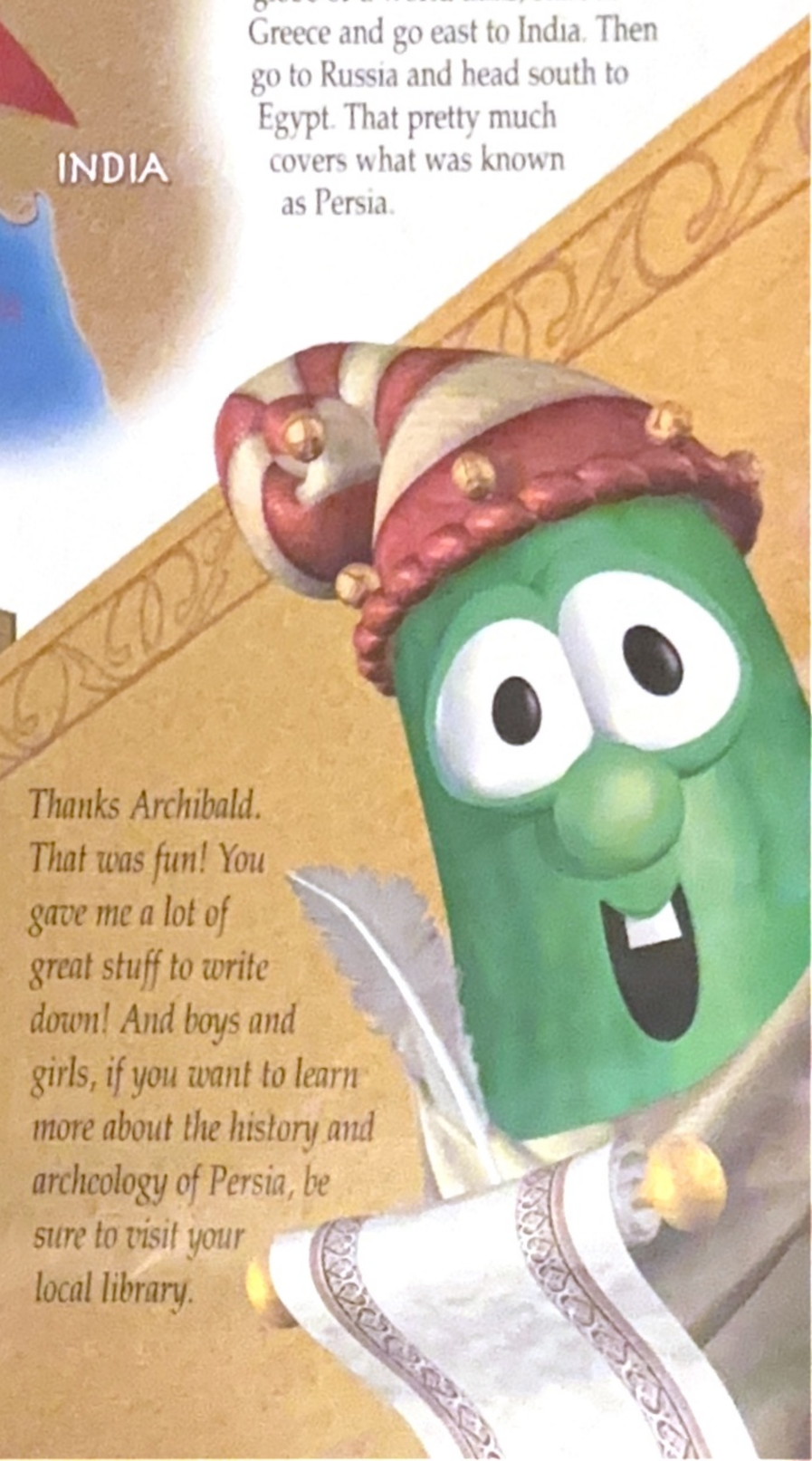
In its day, the Persian Empire was rather large. How big? Well, if you look at a globe or a world atlas, start at Greece and go east to India. Then go to Russia and head south to Egypt. That pretty much covers what was known as Persia.

That looks familiar

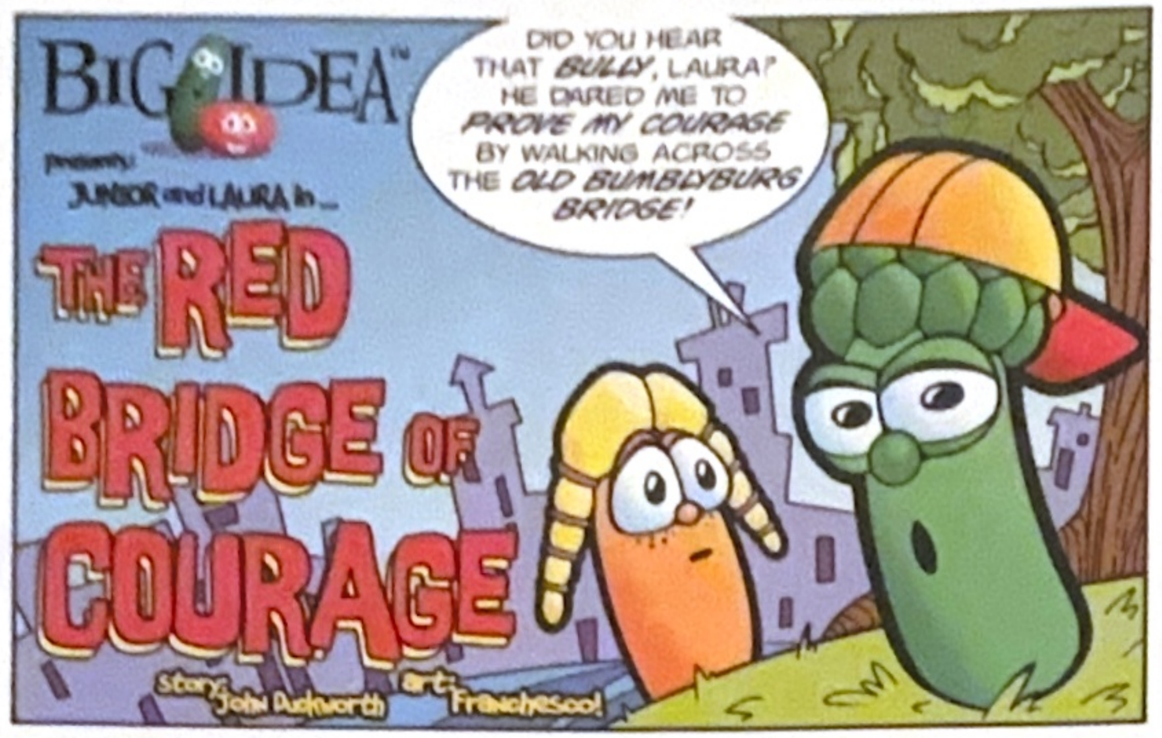
One of the things archeologists have discovered is that Persia learned lots from the lands they conquered. Because they chose to incorporate styles from the lands they controlled, Persia had many different styles of architecture and art.

The friendly conquerors

While most of the ancient world was under Persian rule, the rulers (like King Xerxes) tended to be pretty friendly. Cyrus the Great, the first emperor of Persia (and Xerxes' grandpa), even issued a proclamation in 539 B.C. that allowed Jews to return to their homeland.



Thanks Archibald. That was fun! You gave me a lot of great stuff to write down! And boys and girls, if you want to learn more about the history and archeology of Persia, be sure to visit your local library.


BIG IDEA
presents
JUNIOR and LAURA in...
THE RED BRIDGE OF COURAGE
story: John Duckworth
art: Francheseco!
DID YOU HEAR THAT BULLY, LAURA? HE DARED ME TO PROVE MY COURAGE BY WALKING ACROSS THE OLD BUMBLYBURS BRIDGE!

JUNIOR, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO PROVE YOUR COURAGE! YOU'VE GOT TO STAND UP--

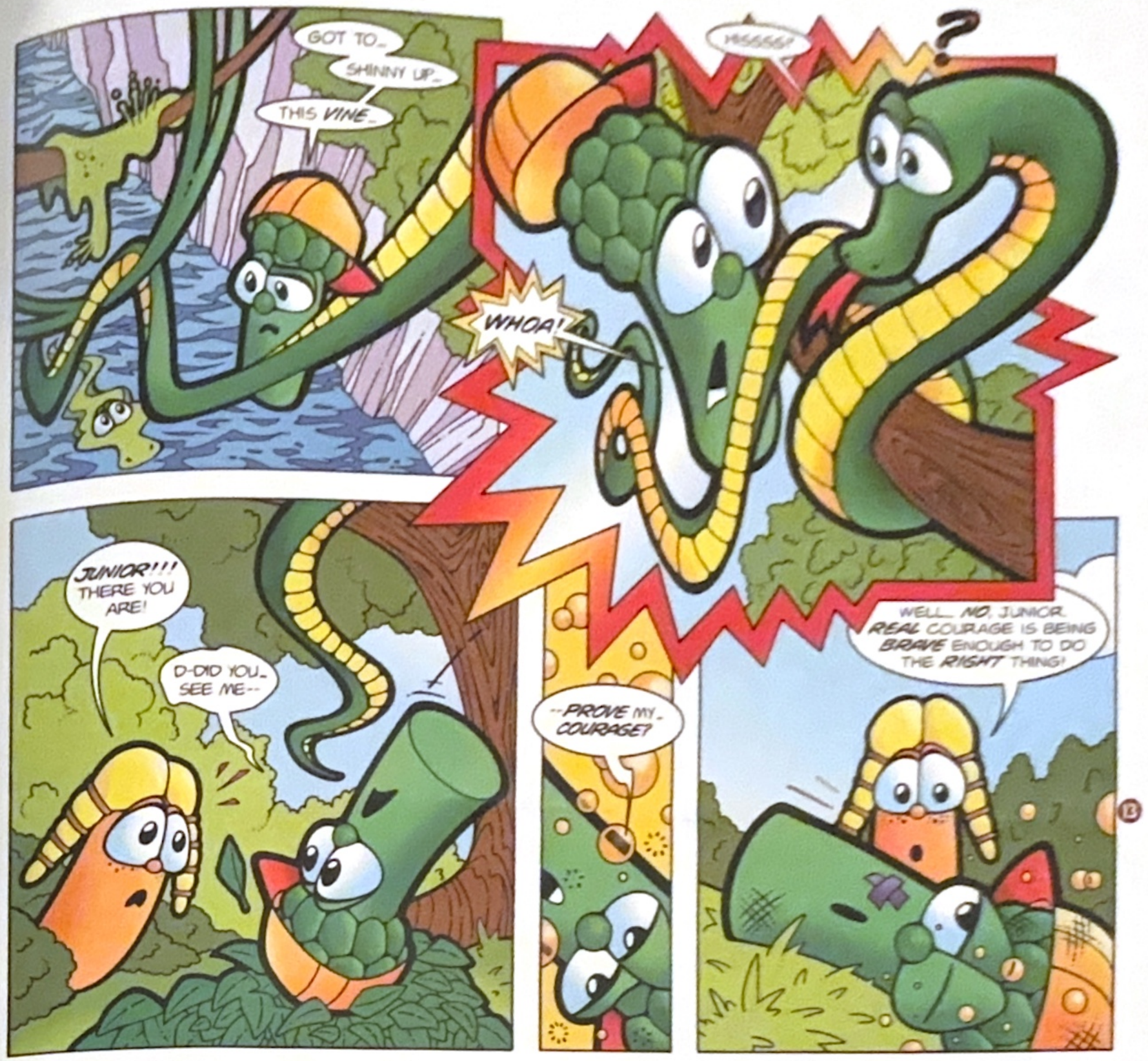
Old bumblyburs bridge
DANGER
CLOSED! forever
I KNOW, I KNOW! JUST WATCH ME!

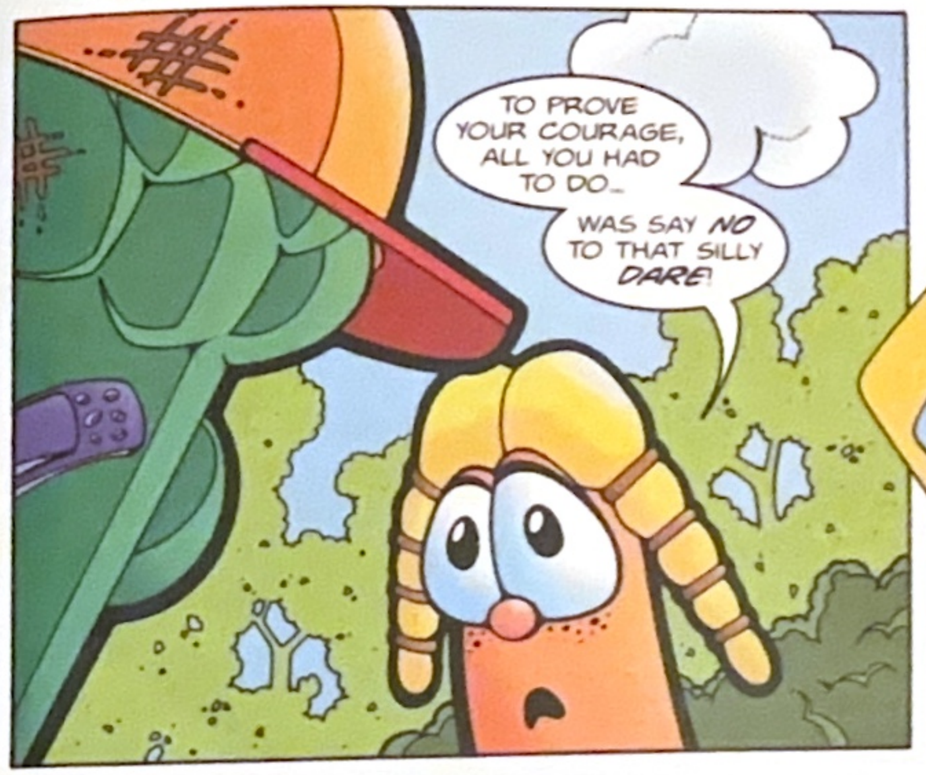
IF I CAN JUST MAKE IT ACROSS, I'LL--
BUT JUNIOR! REAL COURAGE DOESN'T MEAN--

YIPES!

HAAALLPPP!!!
splash

EEEE!!!!!!!!!!!


GOT TO--
SHINNY UP--
THIS VINE--
WHOA!
HSSSSS!
?
JUNIOR!!! THERE YOU ARE!
D-DID YOU SEE ME--
--PROVE MY COURAGE?
WELL, NO, JUNIOR. REAL COURAGE IS BEING BRAVE ENOUGH TO DO THE RIGHT THING!


TO PROVE YOUR COURAGE, ALL YOU HAD TO DO--
WAS SAY NO TO THAT SILLY DARE!

NOW SHE TELLS ME!
THE END

Fan Mail!

Jenna Bounds
Rock Island, Illinois

Grace Sanderson
Belton, Missouri

Beth Leisy
Grants Pass, Oregon

Johanne Ly Lunde
Oslo, Norway

Ryan Gilbert
West Chester, Ohio

Joseph Moltz
DeLand, Florida

Family Activities!

Have a Parade at Home!

In *ESTHER ... The Girl Who Became Queen*, Esther's relative Mordec saves King Xerxes' life and is rewarded with a parade. Parades hap for lots of reasons, but one thing is for sure: parades are lots of fun! Where else can you find clowns, floats, candy, horses, and fire eng all at the same place? (Of course, these probably weren't all eleme at Mordecai's parade!) Parades don't happen in your town every week. But you can still have a parade with your kids any time want — especially if you want to honor y kids for something that they done like King Xerxes did for Mordecai).

A paper towel roll can be a great horn or flute!

For a parade at home, you need:

- Family members and friends
- Silly dress-up clothes, including hats, gloves, and shoes
- Whistles, flutes, drums, kazoos, and any other kind of musical (or semi-musical) instruments you can think of — don't forget that voices count as instruments!
- Line up single file, then march around your home, backyard, or neighborhood
- Don't forget to wave and smile at the crowd!
- Remember to take pictures so that you won't forget your grand parade

Pots make a sou that can't be be

To make a parade maraca ...

just pour 20 beans or beads into a plastic cup, cover it with another cup, rim to rim, and tape cups together!

S

Fish

places you bu
Larrys, and a
"When kids
them, we
a shirt
reme
go

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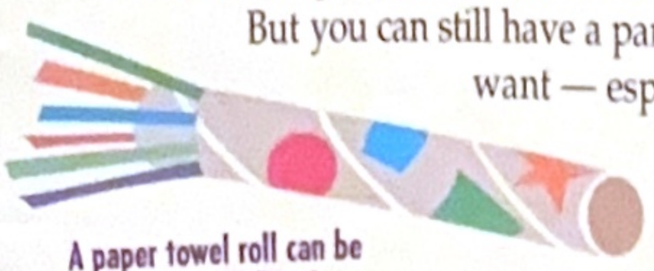

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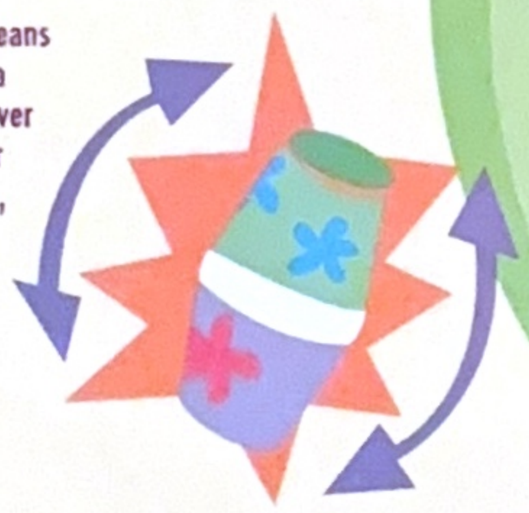
Pots make a sound that can't be beat!

To make a parade maraca ...

just pour 20 beans or beads into a plastic cup, cover it with another cup, rim to rim, and tape cups together!

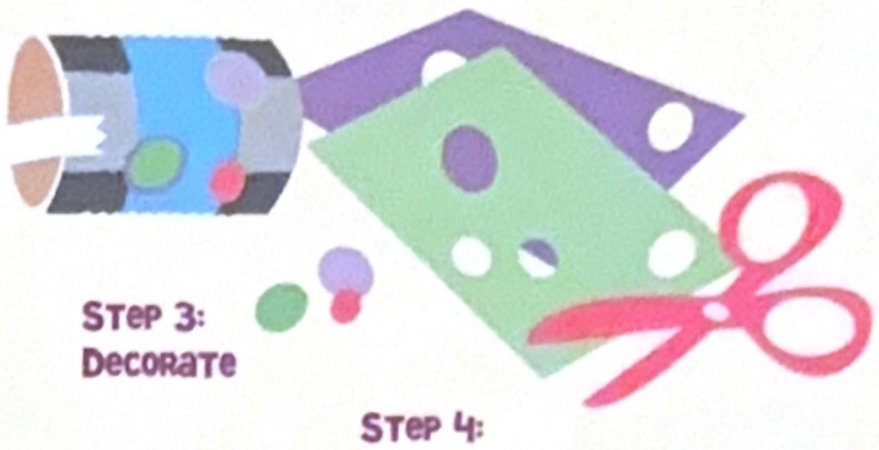


Make some Fun noise!

In the biblical story of Esther, we read about Haman trying to hurt Esther's people. Because of Esther's courage, Haman's nasty plot fails, which is cause for celebration! The holiday of Purim is still celebrated, and Jewish children do so with noisemakers called graggers. When the story of Esther is read, children shake their graggers when Haman's name is mentioned. You can celebrate Esther's courage and God's faithfulness by making your own gragger to shake.

Step 1: Fill tin can with beans

Step 2: Tape cardboard to open end of can



Step 3: Decorate

Step 4: Shake!

To make a homemade gragger, you need:

One tin can
1/8 cup dry beans
Cardboard
Tape
Decoration (wallpaper, newspaper, paint, etc.)

PARENTS!

We would love to hear your stories and see photos of your child's parade or gragger. Please send photos to:

Big Idea Productions
Family Activity
PO Box 189
Lombard, IL 60148

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SOME REALLY FUN STUFF...

Fisher-Price

You may have noticed a few new things at your favorite Christian retail store or other favorite stores. A few new Veggie things. Thanks to agreements with some of the biggest and best manufacturers of toys, clothes, and giftware, there are fun VeggieTales products at the places you buy your videos. Fisher-Price is now making great VeggieTales toys, including talking stuffed Bobs and Larrys, and a Larry-Mobile! Hallmark, which also owns Dayspring, is creating party goods ... and so much more. "When kids fall in love with cartoon characters, they don't just want to watch them. They want to play with them, wear them, and live them," says Phil Vischer, Big Idea's Top Tomato. "We spent a lot of time asking how a shirt or a toy can reflect our values. So when you see VeggieTales toys or gifts or clothes at a store, remember that helping you raise healthy, happy kids is always our highest goal. And replacing a toy that promotes violence or materialism or disrespect with a toy that tells kids that 'God made them special and he loves them very much' is a pretty cool thing!"

Hallmark

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What's the Big Idea?

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